

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

S E C R E T STATE 179568

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 179568 ACTION COLOMBO INFO MOSCOW
10 SEP:

QUOTE SECRET STATE 179568

E.O. 11652:XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, CE, CH, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS ON PRC-SRI LANKA RELATIONS.

REF: (A) COLOMBO 2184; (B) MOSCOW 10756.

1. DEPARTMENT AGREES WITH EMBASSY MOSCOW THAT ASTAPENKO
PIECE IN LITERATURNAYA GAZETA ON PRC-SRI LANKA RELATIONS
IS PRIMARILY AN EXPRESSION OF WIDER SOVIET CONCERNS IN
MOSCOW'S QUARREL WITH PEKING. ARTICLE (PUBLISHED IN
MOSCOW AUGUST 1) APPEARED JUST BEFORE INTENSIFICATION OF
SOVIET POLEMICAL ATTACKS ON PRC VIA AUTHORITATIVE PRAVDA
COMMENTARIES AND BREZHNEV SPEECH, AND HENCE MAY HAVE
SERVED AS ELEMENT IN BUILDUP FOR CURRENT ANTI-CHINESE
CAMPAIGN. ASTAPENKO COMMENTARY MAY ALSO BE RELATED TO
SOVIET DIPLOMATIC AND PRESS OFFENSIVE CONCERNING MOSCOW'S
ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY PROPOSAL. IN JULY, A SOVIET
BROADCAST ALLEGED (INCORRECTLY) THAT "VOICES OF SUPPORT"
FOR THE PROPOSAL ARE HEARD IN A NUMBER OF ASIAN STATES
INCLUDING SRI LANKA, SO THAT "THE PEKING LEADERSHIP IS

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THE ONLY ONE OPPOSING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLLECTIVE
SECURITY SYSTEM IN ASIA". ASTAPENKO'S ACCUSATIONS ABOUT

PRC DESIGNS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN RESONATE WITH THIS LINE. MOREOVER, AS THE ALGIERS NONALIGNED CONFERENCE APPROACHED, MOSCOW HAS BEEN SQUIRMING BENEATH PEKING'S CHARACTERIZATION OF USSR AS SUPERPOWER AND IMPERIALIST STATE OF SAME ILK AS US. SOVIET ARTICLE ON SRI LANKA, UNMASKING PEKING'S SUPPOSED "HEGEMONISTIC AIMS" IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, OFFERS A REBUTTAL--AND, SINCE SRI LANKA IS THE SITE OF THE NEXT NONALIGNED CONFERENCE, PREPARES THE GROUND FOR FUTURE SINO-SOVIET CONFRONTATION IN THE NONALIGNED FORUM.

2. HOWEVER, THE ARTICLE DOES REPRESENT SOMETHING OF A DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW, WHICH HAS PREVIOUSLY MAINTAINED DISCRETE SILENCE ABOUT PRC-SRI LANKA TIES. SOVIET PRESS COMMENTARY ON SUBJECT IN PART REFLECTS MOSCOW'S CONCERN ABOUT LOSING ADDITIONAL GROUND TO THE CHINESE IN SRI LANKA. ASTAPENKO SEEMS CAREFUL TO DIRECT VERBAL FIRE AGAINST PEKING ONLY, STRESSING ALLEGED CONCERN AMONG GSL FIGURES AND POPULACE ABOUT SO-CALLED PRC INTRIGUES. HOWEVER, MURAKA STORY IN SRI LANKA PRESS (ADMITTEDLY OVERDRAWN) INTERPRETS ARTICLE'S CRITICISM OF CHINESE ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS SRI LANKA AS AN IMPLICIT WARNING TO MRS. B ABOUT TOO-CLOSE SRI LANKA RELATIONS WITH PRC. SUCH WARNING WAS VERY LIKELY INTENDED BY SOVIETS, ALTHOUGH AS EMBASSY MOSCOW INDICATES, THIS WAS SECONDARY TO ATTACKING THE PRC.

3. AS REQUESTED TRANSLATION LITERATURNAYA GAZETA ARTICLE ON SRI LANKA HAS BEEN POUCHED. RUSH

UNQUOTE RUSH

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